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ABSTRACT

A report on the National Seminar of American Indian Women is presented. This meeting was planned to provide an opportunity for American Indian women to discuss the needs of Indian communities and expand their understanding of what constitutes an adequate community. The delegates were lay people selected from their home communities. Sixty-eight of the delegates voted to create the first national American Indian women's organization--the North American Indian Women's Association. (CK)

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A REPORT ON:

- **The National Seminar of American Indian Women, held August 2-8, 1970, at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.**
- **The North American Indian Women's Association established by delegates at this seminar.**

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Extension Service • U.S. Department of Agriculture

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 18, 1970

Dear Mrs. Survant:

It gives me great satisfaction to know that the Associated Country Women of the World and the Country Women's Council in the United States are sponsoring a Seminar for American Indian Women.

No meeting could be more timely, and no task more urgent than that of making the American Indian woman a full and active participant in the life of her community and country. At a time when all nations of the world must use their fullest resources to meet the needs of their citizens, you address yourselves in a constructive manner to a priority national program which offers promise not only to Indian communities, but to our country.

I enthusiastically look forward to the results of your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Richard Nixon

Mrs. Eugene L. Survant
Area Vice President
Associated Country
Women of the World
Trinchera, Colorado 81081

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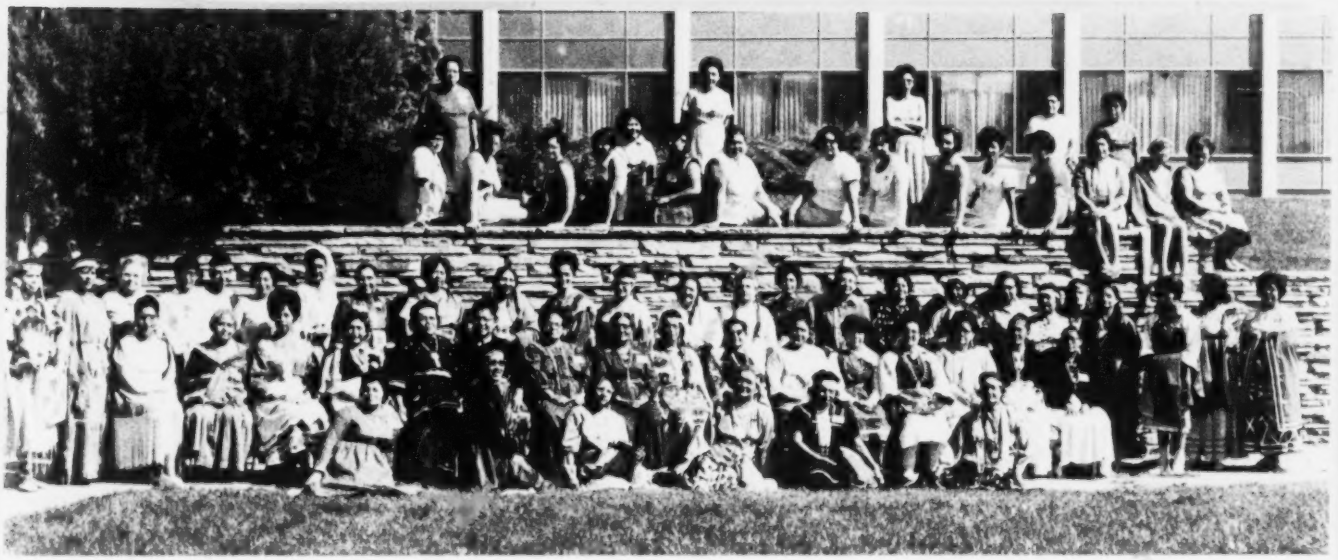


INTRODUCTION

Sixty-eight American Indian women representing 43 tribes from 23 States, voted on August 7, 1970, to create the first national American Indian women's organization—the North American Indian Women's Association.

The women were attending the National Seminar of American Indian Women at Colorado State University. It was sponsored by the Country Women's Council, U.S.A., and the Associated Country Women of the World societies in the United States. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian tribal councils, State land-grant universities, and the Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture assisted with the meeting.

This meeting was planned to provide an opportunity for American Indian women to discuss the needs of Indian communities and expand their understanding of what constitutes an adequate community. It was hoped that such a meeting would stimulate more Indian women to assume leadership in promoting better communities and more enriched lives for Indian families. The delegates were lay people selected from their home communities because they were grass roots leaders actively engaged in community work. The number of delegates from each State was determined by the size of its Indian population.

Mrs. James M. Cox, a Comanche from Midwest City, Oklahoma, now serves as the first president of the North American Indian Women's Association. Mrs. Cox also serves as secretary on the executive board of the National Hall of Fame for Famous American Indians and as second vice-president for the Oklahoma Federation of Indian Women. She is a member of the Indian Community Relations Commission Committee of Oklahoma City, the National Congress of American Indians, and the National Council on Indian Awareness.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mrs. James M. Cox, President, N.A.I.W.A.

The National Seminar of American Indian Women was both enjoyable and successful.

I visited with many delegates. They were congenial and knowledgeable about current events and I was pleased to find that they discussed Indian problems in a non-political and non-agitative way. We Indian women soon realized that the people responsible for setting up the seminar intended that we make it our seminar. Things happened fast.

Iyonne Garreau, Sioux delegate from South Dakota, and several other delegates, decided that we should take advantage of the opportunities afforded us and form a national association of American Indian women. A nominating committee selected ten officer candidates who would provide the organization with representatives from different regions of the United States. The candidates were presented to the delegates and voted into office by a unanimous vote.

We selected the "North American Indian Women's Association" as the name of our organization. Then we set up membership rules, established our goals, and discussed meeting sites and dates for the following year's meeting. The non-Indian women present seemed to be amazed at the swiftness of our action, once we decided that the seminar was ours. Many were surprised to find that we did not have to consult with them on any matters.

The North American Indian Women's Association will work toward achieving more stable homes and communities, both emotionally and economically. We will also be concerned with the preservation of our North American Indian culture. By so doing, we will preserve for the United States of America art forms, language and songs that this country can truly call its own. More Americans need to know and understand the cultural heritage that we all share.

Another important goal of N.A.I.W.A. is to promote fellowship among all people. Perhaps now that the United States has reached its growth geographically, all nationalities can concentrate on learning to know one another. By making an effort to understand people, we usually find that we have the same interests and desires.

I have great hopes and expectations for the future of the North American Indian Women's Association. Already, women from two States have started organizing groups to affiliate with the new national organization.

A new organization may be born quickly but time is required if members are to grow together. Our members understand this and they recognize that careful planning is essential during this period.

The members of N.A.I.W.A. will be ever grateful to all those who made the National Seminar of American Indian Women possible. The sleeping buffalo has gotten on its feet and is now shaking the dust from its body.

I truly believe that the North American Indian Women's Association will have a favorable, positive impact on the United States of America.

BRINGING INDIAN WOMEN TOGETHER

"The National Seminar of Ame ican Indian Women is the first meeting of its kind to be held in the United States," said Mrs. Eugene L. Survant, area vice-president of the Associated Country Women of the World. "ACWW and the Country Women's Council, U.S.A., the two groups that took the initiative in setting up and funding this meeting, are pleased to have played a part in bringing Indian women together for a national meeting. We hoped that the delegates would make this their meeting, but the exciting formation of the North American Indian Women's Association was more than anyone had anticipated. Delegates to this meeting can truly be proud of what they accomplished in just a few days."

Goals of the Country Women's Council, U.S.A. and the Associated Country Women of the World are to promote international goodwill, friendship, and understanding among country women and homemakers of the world; a higher standard of living for rural women; and a voice for country women in international affairs. Programs of nutrition education, sanitation, child care, and community development, and seminars for lay leaders have been conducted by their members in many countries of the world. The National Seminar for American Indian Women is the first meeting for lay leaders held by CWC and ACWW in this country.

INTRODUCTIONS TO THE GROUP

The first time that they assembled at a meeting, delegates were asked to step up to a microphone on the speaker's platform and introduce themselves to the rest of the group. Each delegate did this, many also saying at this time, "I am glad to be here" or "I am honored to be with so many Indian women."

Far right. "My name is Louva Dahozy and I belong to the Navajo tribe in Fort Defiance, Arizona."

Right. "My name is Betty Mae Jumper and I belong to the Seminole tribe in Hollywood, Florida."

BEN REIFEL SPEAKS...

"This meeting brings together the doers of the tribes," said Rep. Ben Reifel of South Dakota, who addressed the delegates at the opening session. After describing his own Sioux ancestry, Mr. Reifel told how he felt the development of Indian communities of the 70's would depend on the combined efforts of Federal and State governments, tribal councils, and individual tribal members.

"The Indian people themselves will be mainly responsible for tribal development," he said, "and it is the women who will have to train children to survive in the modern culture in which they find themselves. If we want to hold jobs, have nice homes, and educate our children, we have to have a sense of time. We have to get to jobs on time and be concerned with time. We must learn to save and manage our incomes for the future. It is the Indian himself who must decide what to keep from his heritage while he adjusts to the realities of the dominant culture which surrounds him but which does not necessarily need to engulf him."

MICHAEL TAYLOR SAYS...

Michael Taylor, consultant for Indian affairs with the Colorado Department of Education, described the Federal legislation related to education that he felt should be working knowledge for Indians who want better education for their young people. He expressed the opinion that BIA schools were imperfect but that they were the

Indian's own schools. Changes could be made, he felt, with the help of the Indian people. During the lively question and answer period that followed Mr. Taylor's comments, delegates and the speaker discussed the need for more Indian counselors in the schools, ways parents could help counselors and faculty better understand the needs and culture of Indian children, the availability of scholarship help, and questions that parents could ask to be sure that Indian children are getting high quality education and job training.

THE BIA...

Speaking for Commissioner Louis Bruce, Special Assistant Tom Reid of the Bureau of Indian Affairs told delegates of the changing role of the BIA, explaining that instead of a managerial relationship with tribal groups, BIA now seeks to become a service organization. He predicted an increasing emphasis on technical services from area offices. And he said, "The tribes themselves will have the option of taking over BIA services within their own tribal governments."

SHARING IDEAS

Delegates began sharing their knowledge and ideas before the National Seminar of American Indian Women was organized. Questionnaires were sent out in advance to help the women prepare for the meeting. Mary Kennington, Extension Service program leader for Indians, said, "Our theme was 'Indian Women Prepare for the Seventies,' and in order to do this planning, we asked the women to study their community's problems and concerns and then complete the questionnaires we had sent them."

An evaluation of the completed questionnaires showed that the delegates felt strong concerns about employment; education; job training; recreational facilities; housing; Indian participation in community organizations and agencies; the improvement of community facilities such as water, sewage, and telephone service; care of the elderly; alcoholism and drug abuse; and first aid and home health care training.

The program for the National Seminar of American Indian Women was based on the concerns expressed by the women in their questionnaires. Discussion group sessions were planned as part of the meeting so that the delegates could work in small groups, discussing their common concerns and problems and exchanging ideas for coping with problems.

INDIAN HANDWORK

Delegates were given the opportunity at one of the evening sessions to show arts and crafts produced by tribal members. At first, only a few of the delegates had something to display. Then, as the women began to ask questions and their interest became obvious, many delegates began returning to their rooms to get something to show. Soon, a display table was filled with beadwork, pottery, turquoise and silver jewelry, paintings, clothing, leather goods, and many other handmade items.

The delegates' pride in their cultural heritage was evident. Realizing that they were in an unusually large group of Indians from all over the country, they seized the opportunity to share techniques they had developed for dyeing fabrics and tanning leather. Several delegates told how members of their tribes were developing new retail outlets for their handwork. Tribal customs, folklore, and food preparation also were discussed. One delegate used her tape recorder to play the ancient songs of her tribe. Others sang in their native language.

Several times during the evening, delegates discussed the problems they had in helping young Indians understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. Several women told how groups of young Indians were being taught to speak in their native language. Others told of classes in handwork for Indian children.

SAVING LIVES WHEN HELP IS FAR AWAY

Emergency medical help is not always available in remote parts of the United States. Delegates were interested in seeing Lt. Tom Fierce, safety training officer with the Fort Collins Fire Department, demonstrate mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Lt. Fierce asked the women to practice the lifesaving treatment on "Susie," an inflatable dummy designed for this purpose. Many of the first volunteers were delegates who live near the water and know firsthand how important time is in aiding a drowning victim. Lt. Fierce told delegates to contact their local fire department or county health service to arrange lifesaving training courses for their community.

AND AT OTHER MEETINGS

Other speakers who participated in the National Seminar of American Indian Women included Dr. John R. Bagby, director of the Institute of Rural Environmental Health; and Dr. Eldon P. Savage, chief of the chemical epidemiology section of the Institute of Rural Environmental Health, Colorado State University. During the question and answer period, delegates asked about the possible dangers of using pesticides for range management, the effect of detergents on water supply, abandoned open pit mines, refuse disposal, and other environmental matters that concerned them.

At another meeting, Mrs. Jeanne Wasile, audio-visual special assistant with the Department of Labor in Washington, D.C., told the delegates about the new American Indian Audio-Visual Institute established to encourage the development and distribution of educational films that employ Indians behind as well as in front of the camera. Mrs. Wasile also told the women about another new organization—the American Indian International Travel Service—that seeks to encourage tourism in Indian regions of this country.

"Better Communications for Family Life" was the topic chosen by Mrs. Roberta Frasier, family life specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, Oregon State University. With Mrs. Frasier's help, delegates role-played family situations in which communication problems existed.

Miss Brigid Berry, clinical social worker, Phoenix Indian Medical Center in Arizona, showed films on alcoholism and stressed the need for preventive educational programs and early medical care for both alcoholism and drug abuse.

Charles McDougall, assistant administrator for relations, Extension Service, USDA, Washington, D.C., told the delegates how Extension education had developed in this country and reviewed the scope of activities in which Extension educators are now working. Following his remarks, Dr. Damaris Bradish, consumer education specialist, Arizona State University; Al Triviz, associate director, Extension Service, New Mexico State University; Tom Reid, special assistant to the Commissioner, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington, D.C.; and Lowell Watts, director, Extension Service, Colorado State University, reported to delegates on the work being done by Extension educators in different parts of the country.

Three delegates—Mrs. Naomi Shepherd of Yakima, Washington; Mrs. Ethelene Conseen, Cherokee, North Carolina; and Mrs. Bonnie Clanton, Uintah and Ouray Reservations, Utah—were selected to report on examples of successful Indian leadership.

Mexico. The oldest delegate was Miss Julia Mahseet, a 62-year-old Comanche from Apache, Oklahoma. Mrs. Ruth Gladue, a Chippewa from Belcourt, North Dakota, was voted the most talented delegate for her singing and guitar playing. Mrs. Mary Jane Fate, an Athabaskan from Alaska, received the title of Mrs. Congeniality. Circle dancing and group singing rounded out the evening.

A fashion show was Friday's treat. Delegates modeled clothes designed and manufactured by a South Dakota firm headed by two Sioux women. Their clothing is adapted from traditional Indian designs.

THERE WAS FUN, TOO

Wednesday evening was fun night, planned and staged by the delegates. They announced the selection of Mrs. Hildreth Venegas, a Sioux from Sisseton, South Dakota, as Mrs. Indian Seminar of 1970. Mrs. Cecelia Corcoran, a Chippewa Cree from Montana, was the mother with the most children (13). Mrs. Ruth Davis, a Creek from Wetumka, Oklahoma, was the woman married the longest (40 years). The youngest woman attending the meeting was Miss Mayfa Silva, a 21-year-old Hopi from Espanola, New

LEADERSHIP IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

Miss Mary Kennington, Program Leader
Extension Service, USDA

Miss Mary Kennington retired as Extension program leader for Indians on September 23, 1970. She had provided national leadership in the planning and development of Extension programs for Indians since 1956. Prior to that, Miss Kennington was employed as home economist in the Office of the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., as home economist with the BIA at several agencies, and as a teacher of home economics in a public high school.

A leader is one whose ideas and actions influence the thoughts and behavior of others. A leader understands the direction a group wants to take and is able to help them reach their destination.

As you attempt to get action from your group, you will realize that you must continually adjust the purpose or objective you want to reach. Know your direction but be flexible. There may be many alternatives, so listen to what the group or community members say. They may have a better idea or plan than you have.

Leaders must believe in, and work at, their cause. Remember the situation and your purpose. Break your action into bits and pieces that can be clearly understood and accepted by the group so that each person is involved.

Although you are dedicated to your purpose and perfectly willing to be flexible in your course of action, you must also be willing to accept criticism and the consequences of your action. At times, you may feel that everyone has forsaken you and say, "Why should I give my time and energy to this group? They are not interested. They are too lazy to do anything about improving our community." Relax; perhaps you have gone too fast for them. Go back to your advisors or supporters and talk it over. Maybe you need to detour or travel in another direction for awhile.

You may ask, what is so special about women leaders? I think you are very special. You have the first and most intimate relationship to children; you are family managers; you can set an example by your own efforts and stimulate action to overcome blocks for others. Are you ready to accept the responsibility?

If each of you returns to your community committed to the idea of wanting to build a better community, you will talk with your neighbors, your tribal officials, representatives of agencies, and your family, to decide what you want to improve. You will get facts about the situation, find out who can help you, and determine how you can go about accomplishing what you want. In other words—you will get all the knowledge or information you can about the problem, commit your time and the time of others who are interested, and then chart your journey, step by step. Remember, leadership is a journey, not a destination.

THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

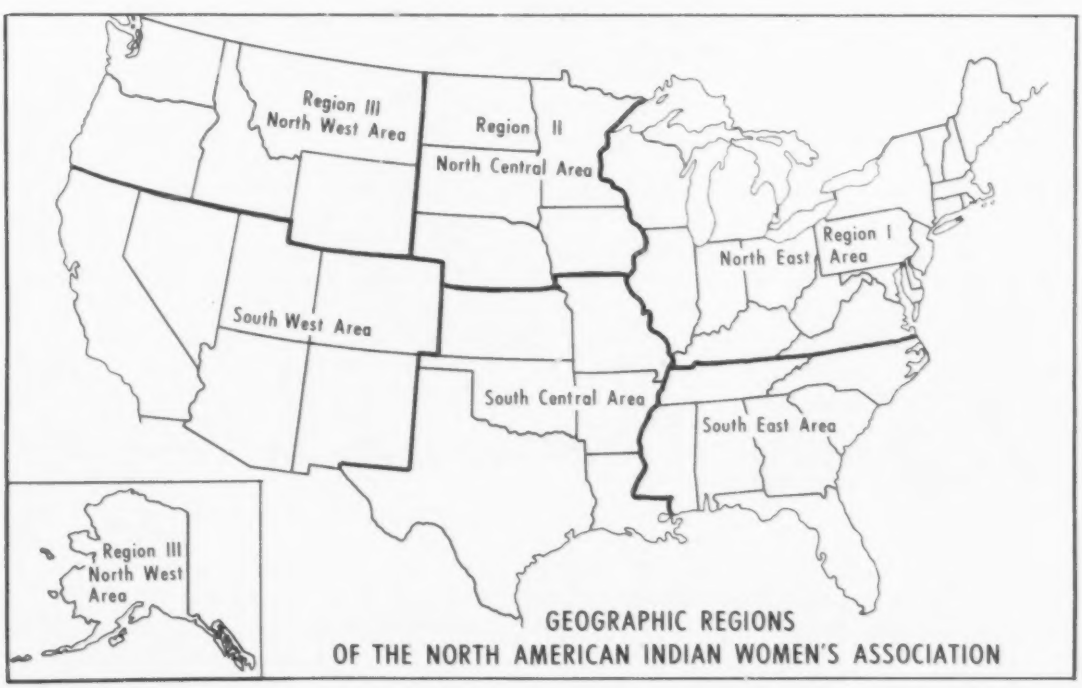
Delegates to the National Seminar of American Indian Women seized the opportunity to form their own organization, elect officers, and determine their goals for the future. The North American Indian Women's Association, or N.A.I.W.A. as it will likely be known, has been created by Indian women to provide all Indian women with the opportunity to work together for these common goals:

- The betterment of home, family life, and community.
- The betterment of health and education.
- Promoting inter-tribal communications.
- Promoting an awareness of Indian culture.
- Promoting feilowship among all people.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1970-71

PRESIDENT	Mrs. James M. Cox (Comanche) Midwest City, Oklahoma
VICE PRESIDENT	Mrs. Naomi Shepherd (Nez Perce) Wapato, Washington
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT	Mrs. Violet Miller (Menominee) Keshena, Wisconsin
SECRETARY-TREASURER	Mrs. Patricia Littlewolf (Northern Cheyenne) Busby, Montana
DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP	Mrs. Louva Dahozy (Navajo) Fort Defiance, Arizona
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS	Mrs. Marcelle LaBeau (Sioux) Gettysburg, South Dakota
DIRECTOR OF INTER-TRIBAL COMMUNICATIONS	Mrs. Mary Jane Fate (Athabaskan) Fairbanks, Alaska
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH	Mrs. Be[illegible]Mae Jumper (Seminole) Hollywood, Florida
DIRECTOR OF INDIAN CULTURE	Mrs. Adel[illegible]e Wanatee (Mesquakie) Tama, Iowa
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION	Miss Mary Ann Cavanaugh (Devil Lake Sioux) St. Michael, North Dakota

The executive committee of the North American Indian Women's Association divided the country into geographic regions so that their officers could be chosen from these areas and thus represent Indians from all over the United States. Future meetings will be held on a rotating basis in the different regions. While it is recognized that more Indians live in the Western States, the founding members of N.A.I.W.A. wanted to provide Indian women all over the country with an equal opportunity to participate and make their voices heard.



GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

THE BANQUET

It was ceremonial dress and high excitement at the banquet Friday evening, with much picture-taking and spirited conversation. The National Seminar of American Indian Women was about over, and a new organization for American Indian women had been created. There was a feeling of accomplishment in the air and a feeling of closeness. Delegates felt that they had shared something important. Their satisfaction and their joy with one another were clearly visible as they shared this evening.

Mrs Alonzo Petteys, a member of the Colorado Extension Homemakers Council, told delegates at the banquet of a little Irish woman who spoke to country women from other countries and said, "We shall not have budged an inch unless we take residence in the viewpoints of others." Mrs. Petteys told the delegates that they had succeeded in taking residence in others' viewpoints during the seminar. "Here, we have enjoyed a mutual exchange in free communication. You have given your points of view generously. We ask you to share ours as freely in the bond that unites country women throughout the world."

A YOUNG PRINCESS SPEAKS...

An inspiring highlight of the banquet was the address given by Miss Indian America, who is Virginia Alice Stroud of Muskogee, Oklahoma. Nineteen-year-old Virginia Stroud is the first Cherokee to win this national title at the All-American Indian Day's contest in Sheridan, Wyoming. In her remarks to the delegates, she told of her childhood, describing how difficult life had been after her mother died. An older sister held the family together. Miss Stroud recalled how she and her brothers worked as migrants to support themselves. Although she was only 13 years old when her mother died, Virginia proudly recalled that her mother had frequently said to her, "*When* you go to college . . ." Virginia Stroud was able to make her mother's dream come true. She now attends Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. She urged the delegates to do all they could to help young people. "They are our leaders of tomorrow," she said.

Printed materials of all kinds were distributed during the seminar. Some of these publications were brought to the meeting by speakers; others were provided by organizations represented at the meeting. Some were brought by the delegates themselves.

The following is excerpted from a hand-out piece made available by delegates to non-Indians attending the seminar, with the hope that this would help non-Indians better understand and appreciate Indian values.

INDIAN AND NON-INDIAN VALUES

To Indians . . .

Time is Unimportant

Time is a very relative thing. Clocks are not watched. One does things as they are needed to be done. Often the family gets up as the sun rises and retires soon after the sun sets. "Indian time" means when everyone gets there. A community meeting can be set for 1 p.m. and people will come as near that time as they wish, so the meeting actually may begin an hour or two later, and this bothers no one.

Today Concept

Indian people generally live each day as it comes. Plans for tomorrow often are left until the future becomes the present.

Age

Respect is for the elders. Experience is felt to bring knowledge, so the older one is, the more knowledgeable he is. No effort is made to conceal white hair or other signs of age.

Man Lives in Perfect Balance with Nature

The earth is here to enjoy. If man accepts this world as it is and lives as he should with it, there will not be sickness or lack of food.

To Non-Indians . . .

Time is Important

Time is of the utmost importance. When a person says he will be somewhere at 10 a.m., he must be there at 10. Otherwise, he is felt to be a person who "steals" another man's time. More and more, non-Indians rush. It is felt among this culture that it is good to use time to its fullest extent.

Tomorrow Concept

Non-Indians are constantly looking to tomorrow. Items such as insurance, savings for college, vacation plans, etc., suggest to what extent non-Indians hold this value.

Youth

Thousands of dollars are spent yearly for hair dyes, make-up, and other items that make older people look younger. Whole towns have sprung up in the United States which advertise youthful living for "senior citizens."

Man Controls Nature

Constantly this culture searches for new ways to control and master the elements. Artificial lakes are made; natural waters are controlled; electricity is generated and controlled. Such accomplishments are looked upon with pride.

DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL SEMINAR OF AMERICAN INDIAN WOMEN
August 2-8, 1970
Fort Collins, Colorado

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